

10 October 1993

Dear Mr Lintner,

Despite the time it has taken me to respond to your letter of June, I was delighted to receive it and hope that you will excuse me for taking so long to write back to you.

I was fascinated to read what you said about Kang Sheng and Thakin Ba Thein Tin, the CPB, Nagas, and Kachins etc. I was also very interested in ~~your~~ your comments on Kang and Ted Hill---Kang was certainly Hill's host on many of his visits to China and your account of Kang planning that his revolutionary drive south would end in Australia squares with all that I have heard.

I would be very interested to receive any more details that you might have of Kang and Hill. While I was writing *The Claws of the Dragon* I attempted to contact Hill's widow---Hill, who was indeed a QC, died about three years ago---, but as soon as she heard that I wanted to discuss the dealings that she and her husband had had with China she, and those around her, became extremely reticent. Even people outside the CPA (ML) group would not return telephone calls---there are obviously some Maoists in Melbourne who are waiting for the second coming. I will, however, soon have an opportunity to tackle the Hills and the CPA (ML) from another angle and might be able to dig up something more interesting.

You asked some specific questions about Kang and Burma.

a. To the best of my recollection I did not come across any information about Kang and Burma, although I might have seen a photo or two in old copies of *Peking Review* of Kang entertaining Burmese in Peking during the Cultural Revolution. But it would have been natural for Kang to have had dealings with Burmese Communists, especially after the Cultural Revolution began and he assumed responsibility for running the International Liaison Department. The ILD, of course, managed China's dealings with all foreign Communist parties, irrespective of whether they were in power or not.

Were there any Burmese in Yan'an during the late 1930s or early 1940s? There were a number Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese Communists there---including Ho Chi Minh---so Kang would almost certainly have known any Burmese who were in Yan'an at that time. If you have any names of such Burmese I could check whether they appear in Kang's circle.

b. On Kang's motives for taking an interest in Burma, my sense is that by far the most important consideration would have been to export revolution in order to be able to point ~~to~~<sup>to</sup> international trends that showed the Cultural Revolution was a universal phenomenon. There is a measure of anti-Soviet sentiment in this---ie showing that it is Chinese, not Soviet, communism that brought about revolution in Burma, Cambodia, etc. But his main objective would have been to use events in Burma to prove that the China that he and his patron Mao were creating

was the mother of all revolutionary movements---he used the student riots in Paris to the same effect, boasting to one visitor that they were evidence of Chinese influence on European young people.

c. Kang would not have cared much about foiling KMT espionage against China per se, but he would have been interested in getting material evidence and details of KMT activity across the border in Burma and Thailand in order to prove that Party leaders in Yunnan were on the KMT payroll etc. *Claws* cites Kang saying that he knew all about KMT special-service organization plans (p. 355-6), which could well be reading as implying that he had some material on the subject. Even during the Cultural Revolution it was necessary to have something that could be presented as evidence in order to convict high cadres of espionage. Records captured from KMT bases in Burma and Thailand would have fitted the bill nicely: while documents from these bases probably did not mention any of Kang's potential targets, if Kang had possession of such papers he could say that they implicated such and such an official and no one would have been in a position to refute him. Possession of mysterious documents would have given Kang all the power he needed to deal with local officials.

I should add that Kang almost completely paralysed the Communist intelligence machinery during the Cultural Revolution---clear evidence that he was not concerned with capturing real spies or combatting the KMT in Peking, let alone in distant places like Burma. He was, however, very enthusiastic about accusing others of being enemy agents, hence the utility to him personally of gaining access to KMT archives and records from Burma.

d. I cannot throw any more light on the Artillery Faction; the Red Guards formed numerous armed groups during Cultural Revolution. I assume that the Artillery Faction got on the wrong side of the Army---hence it was identified as having made mistakes. That was a common occurrence at that time. So far there has been no general history of the Cultural Revolution written anywhere, so I cannot direct you to any particular reference. If I learn anything more about it I shall let you know. I guess your surmise about your Sino-Burmese friend is correct: he probably went to Burma in order to get away from the troubles in China.

I do not know anything about China using Burma as a source of heroin or opium. You will be aware, I am sure, that during the Yan'an period the Communists traded in opium in order to help finance their operations. The authorities in Yunnan today could have an equally pragmatic attitude towards heroin: I am sure you will know that the Chinese Customs have occasionally caught smugglers in places like Shanghai and Guangzhou preparing to take heroin to the USA. So there is some sort of drug route through China to the West. I assume there is also some sort of market for drugs in China itself.

Kang Sheng, of course, was an opium smoker well into the 1950s; I do not know what was the source of his supply, but I expect that it was a luxury service provided to a few select (and powerful) members of the elite (and perhaps their aging relatives). I doubt if he would have had

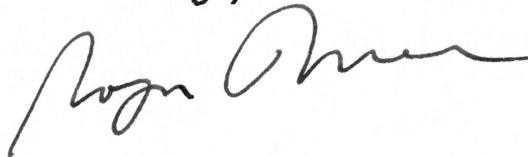
to organize his own personal supplies from Yunnan or the Golden Triangle, but you never know.

If it is of any help---which I rather doubt---you are welcome to quote from the foregoing in *State of Revolt*. In that event, however, please make the attribution read something like "John Byron, author of *The Claws of the Dragon*, a biography of Kang Sheng."

I am currently working on a further China book in which Kang Sheng will appear, although not as the central figure. I would therefore be most appreciative of any further detail you may have about his dealings with South-East Asian Communist Parties. I would also be interested in anything else you may have come across about clandestine Chinese involvement with South-East Asian Communists.

Please pass my regards on to Tiziano when you next see him.

*Yours sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Uren". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a horizontal line.

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